

# CROESUS *and* IONE

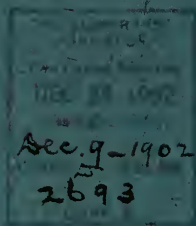
A Drama in Four Acts

*By*

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH WELLS

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# \* CROESUS AND IONE

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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CROESUS, King of Lydia.

CYRUS, King of Persia.

ISMENIDES, a young noble of  
Ephesus.

GLYCON and DORUS, friends of  
Ismenides.

THE QUEEN OF LYDIA.

IONE, a beautiful maiden of  
Ephesus.

GENERALS AND CAPTAINS OF THE LYDIAN ARMY.

WOMEN ATTENDING ON THE QUEEN.

(IONE, pronounced I'ONE.)

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## ACT I.

*Before the temple of Diana at Ephesus. Sunset. People of all classes stand idly about, as if after a festival. A few straggling worshippers enter or leave the temple. Children selling flowers linger near the steps in the hope of a chance customer. An old man of imposing mien who has the appearance of a philosopher, watches the people as they come and go, with an air of abstraction. A young woman with a child in her arms, stands near the old man, who occasionally speaks to her in a pitying tone. GLYCON and DORUS, two young Ephesian aristocrats, descend the temple steps together.*

GLYCON (*yawning*)

“The city falls asleep, and so do we.”

DORUS

“Ay, 'tis most welcome now, this quietude;  
When monarchs rule the day one keeps awake  
But even the sun may shine to weariness.”

GLYCON

“Yet we are richer than when Croesus came.”

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DORUS

"Though poorer for the Lady Ione.

GLYCON

"You bring me news. I had not heard of this."

DORUS

"Why, since the King came here to make his gifts  
The maiden is not seen in Ephesus."

GLYCON

"Not seen! why not? this is a mystery."

DORUS

"'Tis not that we are blind, but she's away.  
The rumor says some Lord in Croesus' train  
Hath wooed her, or perchance hath stolen her.  
The malcontents, 'tis true, suspect the King  
Whose taste in beauty is most exquisite.  
She was the leader of the noble maids  
Who, dressed as Dian's nymphs, attended him  
In gay procession to the temple here."

GLYCON

"Ye gods! and we were free in Ephesus,  
And now our noblest are this tyrant's slaves."

DORUS

"'Tis said Ismenides hath grown in strength  
For very anguish since she disappeared."

GLYCON

"It works so sometimes; let us go to him.  
Friends are like irritants that soothe the pain  
With smarting touches on the wound they heal."  
(*Exit GLYCON and DORUS.*)

OLD MAN

"I heard their words and I am like to weep  
For that sweet lady who hath gone away."

YOUNG WOMAN (*carrying child in her arms—her face tear-stained,  
her dress ragged and dirty.*)

"And I've done naught but weep for days and days.  
I loved her, for when all abandoned me  
She threw a robe of mercy o'er my shame."

FLOWER GIRL

"Alas for Ione! she bought our flowers  
And loved to play that she was one of us.  
As frolicsome as any peasant-maid  
She was, and yet we revered her."

SECOND FLOWER GIRL

"Never shall I forget the day she took  
My wares away from me, and veiling her  
As if some Eastern maid had wandered here,  
She cried, 'Sweet flowers! Lords and ladies, will you buy?'  
And by her witchery of voice and wit  
Sold every bunch for thrice its worth and laughed  
For joy at her own cleverness; then threw  
The money in my lap, and bade me go  
Get comforts for the little ones at home.  
Ah! how the young lords followed her that day  
And how she mocked them that they knew her not,

But thought her one of us, yet did not dare  
So much as touch her hand she ruled them so."

FIRST FLOWER GIRL

"Methought the young Lord Ceyx suspicioned her  
When in his eyes I saw the look they wear  
For none but Lady Ione. Alas!  
This disappearance sure will drive him mad."

SECOND FLOWER GIRL

"And yet she broke no troth in leaving him,  
Having but laughter ever for his vows;  
He was too slavish in his love for her.  
I fear me it is Croesus has her now;  
Proud maids like her love high, or not at all."

OLD MAN

"Hush! hush! her brother comes to pray for her.  
Ah, poor Ismenides! thy step is slow."  
(ISMENIDES approaches, supported by an attendant, and  
enters the temple.)

OLD MAN

"Has Croesus won the gods, or will they hear?"

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.

*In the royal palace at Sardis. An apartment opening to the east. Rich hangings have been drawn away, disclosing an airy balcony overhanging a garden. The time is a moment before sunrise. When the curtain rises IONE is seen with her back half turned to the audience; one arm is holding aside the massive drapery which by the gorgeousness of its color throws her white-robed figure into strong relief. A glow of rosy light appears in the east, and the maiden falls upon her knees—her upturned face and golden hair catch the first rays of the rising sun, and she is as one transfigured. Near her a group of slave-girls watch her every movement with wondering admiration. At the far end of the long apartment an Ethiopian stands on guard.*

IONE

"How pure the dawn is! ever a new birth,  
Touched by no thought of that sweet yesterday  
That fled soft-footed to forgetfulness.  
And this young morn that rises maidenly  
May bear within her breast great thoughts, great loves,  
Ay, greater sorrows, sterner tragedies.  
Morn, I salute thee! bring to Ione  
I pray thee, none but pleasant things, for she  
Is young yet like as thou art, and her feet  
Are very restless, longing for the dance,  
The swaying music, and the minstrelsy."

*(She springs to her feet, and motioning to the maidens to join her, begins a rhythmic movement, but pauses after a few measures and throws herself down, sighing wearily.)*



IONE

" Ah me! I am too frail to bear my heart  
 So laden is it with a weight of love.  
 My King! My King! 'tis such a little while  
 Since no young maid in Greece could dance as I,  
 And now though love is sweet, I am not gay.  
 The spirit of the morning veils her face  
 And will not smile upon me, or perchance  
 Doth shroud in mystery her tenderness;  
 I will make votive offerings unto joy  
 And build a temple for her in my soul  
 That she must dwell in for pure courtesy,  
 Since all my youth is dedicate to her.  
 Oh Joy! sweet goddess; daughter of the morn  
 Thou visitest this earth so fitfully  
 That we would doubt thy love, and our poor hearts  
 Would break for longing, if thy lightest touch  
 Were not so tender, and thine eyes so sweet  
 That rapture grows immortal; born in us  
 And passing from us to Eternity.  
 Ah, thus is love made holy as a prayer."

GUARD (*saluting*)

" Madam—the King! "

(*As CROESUS enters, IONE retains her kneeling posture, but turns and greets him with outstretched arms. Her eyes are full of tears, and she sighs involuntarily.*)

CROESUS (*bending over her, and lifting her*)

" What! tears, my Ione? Is not thy bondage sweet? "

IONE

" Alas, my lord! its sweetness wearies me,  
 And all my womanhood lies in a swoon  
 Without my heart's door, breathing heavily,  
 As slaves breathe, sleeping. I, my lord, was free  
 And would have braved some hardness merrily  
 Some roughness of the march or battlefield.  
 An Eastern houri would be happy here  
 And so am I; it is a paradise  
 That leaving, one might wander desolate  
 And find not such another 'neath the sun.  
 Yet am I yearning for a rocky glade  
 With camp-fires all alight, while flashing swords  
 Glean out against the forest tapestry.  
 I am of Dian's race, and love not ease."

CROESUS (*smiling dreamily*)

" I care not if the way be rough or smooth  
 So we two walk together for awhile  
 Until the stars that mark our destinies  
 Sink low toward that horizon whose far edge  
 Looks over into lands we know not of."

IONE

" And then, my lord! what then? "

CROESUS (*gayly*)

"Then, if our streams of being must diverge,  
I'd leave thee in some vale of dreaming love  
Where thy most tender soul should solace find.  
While I? Ye gods! Give me the eternal winds  
That blow the stars before them like to leaves.  
Thus would I sweep before me men, yea, worlds.  
So strong within me is this spirit fire  
That scorning earth claims kinship with the sun.  
And thou? Ah, tremble not! no cruel gale  
Shall ruffle thy sweet petals, oh, my rose!  
Nay then, thou'rt cold! come close, I'll shelter thee."

IONE (*shivering*)

"Even as thou did'st speak, a strange cold breath  
Came swiftly from the east and chilled my heart.  
Always it is the east to which I turn, and yet  
Some presence warns me that my death lies there."

CROESUS (*merrily*)

"Nay, foolish one! but gardens sweet with flowers  
And jewels that have decked great Cyrus' queens—  
For we shall conquer him, and thou shalt sit  
Most royally, while royal maidens wait  
To serve thee on their knees. Thou art the prize  
Of none but Croesus, and not death himself  
Shall take his treasure from the king of kings."

*(The KING attempts to embrace her, but IONE draws herself to her full height, and returns his glance with one of hurt defiance.)*

IONE

"Croesus! my soul intoxicate with love  
Was even now within that dreaming vale  
Thou tellest of, and thought that it was Heaven;  
Yet would I have thee know, my lord, tho' I  
Do gladly bear this shame and banishment  
'Tis as the sharer of a warrior's heart  
And not the jeweled mistress of a king."

CROESUS

"Thou fiery maid! thy glances scathe, it seems  
Ere they destroy men's perishable hearts.  
To cool this passion, some chill mountain peak  
Should'st thou be chained to, for thou art the child  
Of that sore punished god who brought to earth  
A fire that kindled once, was quenched no more.  
Nay, frown not! I would perish in the flames  
Most willingly ere thou should'st suffer thus.  
But hark! I hear a footfall like the snow  
That chills that icy peak whereof we jest."

IONE

"It is the Queen! Ah, here are chains for me!"

CROESUS

"And here is one will break them, never fear!  
Yet shall I use some subtlety in this  
That we will not defy her, but delude."

(*The QUEEN enters, and CROESUS advances to greet her with exaggerated courtesy, while IONE folds her hands upon her breast and assumes a proud but respectful attitude.*)

CROESUS

"Fair Queen, I never yet commanded thee  
Yet could I so, I would at this one hour  
Compel thy presence and thy courtesy  
To do thy lord a grace for one he loved."

QUEEN

"Thus openly dost thou confess thy love  
For this lost girl who wins thee from my side?"

CROESUS

"Nay, not of her I speak. Her sire was one  
Who saved me in the desert, when I lay  
Deserted, wounded, and most desperate.  
We, joining hands, were brothers till the hour  
When in the thick of battle, like a shield  
He rode before me; thus received my death,  
And dying, gave me her as his bequest.  
So then from Ephesus I brought her here."

QUEEN (*contemptuously*)

"And tended her thyself; sure princely rank  
Is hers, when the great Croesus plays her slave."

CROESUS (*mildly*)

"Her rank is princely, but 'tis pity spreads  
O'er this young head its shielding canopy."

QUEEN (*bitterly*)

"Man's pity! what a travesty is this.  
Thy pity! see—I take this damask rose  
And breathe upon it roughly; mar its bloom  
And throw it where a slave may trample it.  
Such is thy pity, and thy tenderness!  
Beware it, girl! for in my eastern home  
When I was young and sweet, and like this flower  
He wooed me, won me like a prince, and brought  
Me, a king's daughter, here to share his throne.  
He loved me, and he crushed me, like to this!"

(*She plucks another rose and crushes it under her foot  
—then continues*)

"Yet am I queen in Lydia, and to me  
Thou makest homage, girl; or as the stars  
Fade out against the glory of the dawn  
Thy little glimmer dies, absorbed and lost;  
Forgotten, as a jewel cast aside.  
And when my will is done, why then the King  
May take his vengeance on me; 'Twill be well  
To so complete the ruin; 'T will be well."

IONE (*kneeling at the QUEEN'S feet*)

"Great Queen, have pity! I am innocent  
Of any wrong to thee or to the King;  
I am but as a child who plays with beams  
Cast by the sun upon the shining sand,



When lo! the sea creeps upward and engulfs  
The foolish one who hath approached too near."

QUEEN (*sternly*)

"Thou chasest beams to-day, but even now  
The shadows steal behind thee, spectre like;  
Relentless, as the ruin of thy youth  
That goes unto its burial, passion-slain  
By him whose pity is thy recompense.  
Yet as thou art so young, and I a queen  
Whose soul has never stooped to cruelty,  
I'll take thee hence to be my bower maid  
And if in truth of princely lineage  
Thou shalt be placed according to thy birth."

IONE (*kissing the QUEEN's hand*)

"Madam, I kiss thy hand and pledge thee here  
My love, and truest loyalty."

CROESUS (*aside*)

"Poor child! her terror hath enfrenzied her  
And prudence shameth love too readily.  
Yet this allegiance may be but a ruse."

(*Aloud to IONE*)

"Go hence, my little one; thou art the Queen's."

(*Aside*)

"But by the gods! thou yet shalt be all mine  
Or else I'll send thee to that vale of dreams."

(*Exit QUEEN with IONE.*)

CROESUS (*softly*)

"Ione! Ione!"

(*She looks back wistfully, but waves her hand once, and  
passes out.*)

CROESUS

"Thou little coward thing! Well, we go hence  
To fight the Persians shortly, and my gear  
Shall be the heavier for thy weight, my girl!  
The Queen may stay and brood on vengeance here,  
I care not; surely I have won the gods  
To grant me this indulgence for my gifts."

(*He paces on, musing*)

"When Cyrus falls—why then, but what is this?"

(*A messenger enters hurriedly accompanied by the Gen-  
eral of the Lydian army. They both kneel before  
CROESUS*)

MESSENGER

"Great King, live thou forever! for thy gifts  
Have won the gods to love thee, and they speak."

CROESUS

"Art thou from Delphi?"

MESSENGER

"I am from thence, O King!"

CROESUS

"Thy message, instantly."

(*The messenger hands him a sealed parchment*)

CROESUS (*reading*)

"That mighty one who yet shall overthrow  
A kingdom, bringing it to utter woe  
To Persia turns his eyes, nor stays his hand;  
He strikes and spares not; 'tis the gods' command."

(*smiling, well pleased*)

"Why, this is what we longed for; thou hast grace  
As all who bring good tidings unto us.  
Go, Simon! rest him, and endow him well;  
For Mercury was not more welcome unto Mars  
Than he who frees my chafing soul to-day."

(*Exit Messenger and General*)

CROESUS (*pacing back and forth with eager strides*)

"Now must I take with oracles of war  
Stern counsel, and consult my sturdy chiefs;  
War-hacked and grim of face, but true to me  
As much I fear me these smooth Greeks are false,  
Or would be could it serve their purposes.  
Yet Ione is Greek, and faithful too,  
I'll send for her. This news will please her well."

(*to a slave*)

"Go thou unto the Queen, and say thy lord  
Commands the maiden to return again  
And hear a message sent from Ephesus.  
'Tis from her kinsmen and concerns her much."

(*The slave obeys, but looks frightened, and CROESUS laughs*)

"Who fears, makes others fear; it is redress  
That fits a woman, in her impotence  
To spill the poisoned vials on her slaves  
That would anoint my head, had she the power."

(*He seats himself, and returning to the perusal of the oracle's message, is soon lost in thought. A stir at the entrance causes him to look up, and he sees the mocking obeisance which the soldier on guard makes, as IONE is admitted. CROESUS' eye flashes angrily, but IONE runs to him, and laughs gayly as she kneels beside him.*)

IONE

"What dangerous looks, my lord! Are they for me?"

CROESUS (*sternly*)

"Nay, not so, sweet one; for the insolent."

IONE

"Then flash thine eyes for some far distant one?"

CROESUS

"Perhaps; but here is news; I'll read it thee."

(*He reads her the scroll, and IONE claps her hands*)

IONE

"And thou wilt march at once, and take me too?"

CROESUS (*teasingly*)

"Why, thou hast sworn allegiance to the Queen."

IONE (*beseechingly*)

"My lord, she was so sad, I pitied her.

But thou wilt let me go? Oh, say thou wilt!"

CROESUS (*pretending anger*)

"I'll make a vestal of thee; thou shalt tend  
The lamps in Dian's temple; sent by me  
As my most precious gift unto her shrine."

IONE (*archly*)

"Oh, pardon me! thou art so happy now  
I know thou canst forgive my treachery."

CROESUS (*appearing to relent*)

"I think thou'rt right. This time I'll pardon thee,  
And take thee with me for thy punishment."  
(*She kisses his hand, and after hesitating a moment looks  
up at him, as if desiring, and yet fearing to ask  
another boon.*)

CROESUS

"Thine eyes speak some petition, more than this  
Which had been granted ere thou asked for it."

IONE (*soberly*)

"O King, thou readest me, my thoughts are thine."

CROESUS (*tenderly*)

"Thou sayest truly, for our souls are one;  
And I would bid thee do this thing unheard  
But that thy play of suppliance is sweet  
And sweet the granting while I hold the power."

IONE

"And sweet it is to kneel for one like me;  
I'd rather be a woman than a queen."

CROESUS

"Would'st thou, sweetheart? Ah, 'tis thy subtlety  
Knowing the love of men for gentleness."

IONE (*laughing merrily*)

"I think of gods, not men; a votaress  
To Dian's temple, dedicate by thee."

CROESUS

"Ah, 'tis a clever ruse, to still the Queen.  
But speak thy wish, and thou shalt have it straight."

IONE

"My lord, I left at Ephesus for thee  
An only brother, ill and desolate.  
I crave a messenger to send him news,  
And bring me word again that he is well."

CROESUS (*frowning*)

"I like it not that thou should'st think of aught  
That lies behind thee; 'tis not meet.  
Thou art the love of Croesus; surely so  
Old loves may be forgotten happily.  
What then? What then? a tear? Nay, Ione  
It shall be as thou wilt; where is thy scroll?"

IONE

"My lord, forgive me if I show it not;  
It is too childish and ill writ for thee.  
I'd die of shame to see thee look on it."

CROESUS

"Well, well! I think that I may trust thee, sweet,  
That 'tis no lover thou art pining for."

IONE (*throwing herself at his feet*)

"Thou knowest truly that I live in thee."

CROESUS

"Ay, so thou dost, my little one; but here  
A close-writ parchment claims me; wilt thou stay,  
Or shall I bid thee leave me presently?"

IONE

"Oh, let me stay and help decipher it.  
I am not learned, yet I crave to learn."  
(*She leans upon his shoulder, and looks curiously at  
the parchment*)

IONE

"It looks most strangely with its curving lines  
Like rivers intersecting; as for these  
They might be roads that lead to Persia."

CROESUS (*laughing heartily*)

"Why, thou hast guessed it with such readiness  
I'll even take thee for a counsellor;  
Disclose my plans and try thy woman's wit.  
It may be, in some vivid flash, the way  
Shall show more clearly than we've traced it here."

IONE (*archly*)

"I grow so very proud in this new rôle  
That much I fear I'll lose that gentleness  
That gods and men approve; so thou hast said."  
(*A sound of arms is heard outside*)

GUARD

"O King! The generals wait to speak with thee."

CROESUS (*hurriedly*)

"Go then, my Ione! prepare thy scroll  
It shall be safely sent to Ephesus."

(*IONE kneels and kisses his hand, and then passes out  
swiftly.*)

GUARD (*aside*)

"She is a subtle Greek, I like her not.  
And yet how Croesus' eyes did flash at me!"

CURTAIN.

## ACT II.

### SCENE II.

(*An antechamber in the apartments of the QUEEN. IONE reclines  
on a divan, slave maidens grouped near her. Time—near  
midnight.*)

IONE (*musings*)

"Ione, poor Ione! surely thou  
Wert Aphrodite's sport in coming here  
To love, and shame, and soft imprisonment.  
And thou, a noble maiden of the Greeks,  
Art held in bondage like some slave of war.  
Great Croesus, how I love thee! even for thee

I have renounced my noble heritage.

Ah, here's the Queen——!"

*(She rises from the divan, and prostrates herself)*

QUEEN

"Rise, maiden! as an elder sister, I  
Do pity thee in thy abandonment  
Unto a passion that shall prove thy doom."

IONE *(aside)*

"Thou'rt much more elder than thou'rt sisterly."

*(To the QUEEN, meekly)*

"Most grateful am I for thy leniency  
O Queen; but let me kneel in penitence  
Having offended, tho' unwillingly."

QUEEN

"Maiden, thou speakest fair; and yet 'tis well  
To know thee better ere I trust to this.  
Thou'rt native born to Ephesus, art not?  
Full well I know the Greeks, and thou art like  
A young Ephesian noble sent us here  
With gifts from that fair city to the King.  
Thou hast his eyes—his hair—and yes—his voice."

*(The QUEEN speaks dreamily, and IONE detects the meaning in her tone.)*

IONE *(aside)*

"So thus it was, my brother; thou did'st leave  
Thy heart in Lydia, and reached'st high  
to place thy love upon a throne, as this  
Thy foolish sister has not feared to do."

*(To the QUEEN)*

"Madam, thou'rt placed so loftily, thy glance  
Is like to Juno's from Olympus cast  
Upon a world of men that worships her.  
My brother coming hence, distraught as one  
Who rises from a fever ere 'tis past  
Filled our fond hearts with grief; his cruel state  
Was even as when Aphrodite marks  
A mortal for her sport and leaves him mad,  
With hopeless love and frenzy impotent."

QUEEN *(dreamily)*

"And was it even so? 'tis very sad!"

IONE

"Ay, sad it was; and when the end drew near——"

QUEEN *(wildly)*

"He is not dead? not dead?"

*(IONE marks her shrewdly, and pauses for a moment)*

IONE

"Well no, not dead; but will be so of grief;  
For when the young men march from Ephesus  
To join the swelling hosts of Lydia's king  
And fight the Persians—my Ismenides  
Will lie upon a couch and eat his heart  
For very sadness, that he may not come  
Within such nearness to his goddess' throne."



QUEEN (*musings*)

"He'll stay in Ephesus, while I stay here?"

IONE (*aside*)

"Ay, will he, till thou sendest for him straight."

(*Aloud*)

"There's naught to do but stay; he dies of love  
And will not see the armies back again."

QUEEN

"'Tis sad! oh, very sad! I'm grieved for thee."

IONE

"'Twas knowing this, my dying father gave  
Me to the King; for poor Ismenides  
Is crowned with fatal blooms from Hades brought  
And may not linger long beneath the sun."

QUEEN (*grown white with emotion*)

"Girl! my too sympathetic heart doth throb  
With pain at tales like these; I will retire  
And leave thee to thy slumbers; sleep in peace!"

(*She makes a sign to her attendants to follow her, and  
glides away*)

IONE (*bitterly*)

"So thy dread jealousy is not for love.  
'Tis but thy vanity, and knowing this  
I'll give the King his will more willingly.  
I have had younger lovers, but to me  
He is so like the gods he hath no age.  
Love leaps a wider chasm than yawns between  
His years and mine; we'll bridge it merrily."

(*She throws herself again upon the divan and beckons  
to a slave.*)

"Give me a lute, for song is solace sweet;  
Why! those are words that almost make a song."

(*She takes a lute from the slave, and sings.*)

"Give me a lute, for song is solace sweet  
And bringeth rest again;  
Give me a lute! our trembling fingers meet—  
Ah! now is solace vain;  
The little lute lies broken at thy feet  
And shivers in its pain."

(*IONE throws the instrument down with a laugh*)

"I am no Sappho, and my halting rhymes  
Need better music than a broken lute  
Can lend them. So, this ancient Queen  
(My elder sister truly) has her flaw.  
My guile will reach it, for Ismenides  
Were surely doting could he think her fair,  
Except as grand-dames seem to little boys.  
Yet dizzy heights win glory from the sun  
And lifted eyes grow weaker strained so far.  
Alas! I am so weary, that to sleep  
Is all I long for, and I——"

(*She sleeps, leaving the words unfinished. The QUEEN  
re-enters, and gazes upon her mournfully.*)

QUEEN

"Younger by twenty years than he, and yet  
 So like! so like! just where the hair falls down  
 Upon the white low brow; the wide, deep eyes  
 Set far apart are his, and his the mouth  
 That more pertains to Egypt than to Greece,  
 So rich and lovely are its ruby curves.  
 Ismenides will grieve for her I think;  
 Ah me! to see him once, to hear his voice;  
 When Croesus goes I'll send; 't will not be wrong  
 For is not here his sister waiting him?  
 His sister, torn I verily believe, by force  
 From home and kinsmen by this cruel king."  
*(A curtain is parted behind her, and the KING enters.)*

QUEEN *(starting violently)*

"My lord!"

KING

"Ay; even so."

*(He looks toward the divan where IONE is sleeping)*

QUEEN

"The honor is too great; I am not used  
 To this unmarked, informal courtesy."

CROESUS *(craftily)*

"My gracious Queen, I come to offer thanks  
 For thy most sweet compliance with my will  
 Concerning this young Ione, and speak  
 Of purposes regarding her that thou  
 Most readily will sanction. Ere we move  
 On Persia, I shall send by trusty hands  
 The maid to Dian's temple, there to tend  
 The sacred lamps in vestal purity."

QUEEN *(indignantly)*

"Would'st thou insult the gods? not all thy gifts  
 Could purge thee from so great impiety."

CROESUS

"Nay, thou'rt severe! the maiden has no fault,  
 Unless 'tis sin to be so innocent."

QUEEN

"My lord! the Greeks have taught thee subtlety,  
 And sitting at thy feet, why, even I  
 Must learn a little also; yet in this  
 I fail to see thy meaning; knowing thou  
 Must ever have a purpose under it;  
 A passion, or a whim, to gratify.  
 Whate'er it is, thou gav'st the girl to me  
 And here she stays to charm my loneliness."

CROESUS *(sternly)*

"'Tis only in my absence that thy rule  
 Is known in Lydia. But she awakes!  
 How now, sweet Ione? art frightened then?  
 Come tell me, is my will enough for thee?"

*(IONE sinks to her knees and gazes from him to the  
 QUEEN; then reads the meaning in CROESUS' eyes,  
 and answers)*

IONE

"I am a Greek, and yet in bonds to thee  
To do thy bidding, and I wait thy will."

CROESUS

"Wilt go to Ephesus as vestal, then?"

IONE

"Why, even that, if thou wilt have it so."

CROESUS

"I have so willed it; when I march from hence  
Thou'lt join the company, and where the road  
Diverges, thou to Ephesus shall go  
Guarded by such brave escort bearing gifts  
That the high priestesses shall welcome thee  
Most royally, as coming from the King."

QUEEN (*aside*)

"He is so false, I trust no word of this,  
But I have learned to fear, and hold my peace.  
And yet—Ah! 'tis thy face, Ismenides,  
Copied in her, that makes me as a slave  
Who dares not say, 'I will not,' or 'I will.'"

(*Aloud*)

"O King! since protest may not soften thee,  
And this young maiden must resign her youth  
To sacred service in some distant shrine,  
I'll speed her going. But 'tis midnight now  
When Earth herself is breathing drowsily  
And sighing her to sleep for weariness.  
Young maidens are as flowers, that need the dark  
And coolness; we will leave thee then;  
In my wide-windowed chamber lay us down  
Like sisters in the starlight. Come, my child!  
Thou'rt dreaming even now; 'tis late! 'tis late!"

(*Exit the QUEEN with IONE.*)

(*The KING retires from the other side of the stage. He has hardly done so, when an aged Ethiopian enters softly and approaching the entrance to the QUEEN'S sleeping chamber, strikes a few weird chords on an instrument which he carries under his robe. As if at a well-known signal, the QUEEN presently returns and beckons him to follow her as she glides across the apartment and seats herself near a large screen which conceals her from anyone suddenly entering.*)

QUEEN (*anxiously*)

"Rise, faithful one! only in times of fear  
When I have needed caution hast thou come  
At midnight thus; and well I know, thy care  
Has been to Croesus, cruel as he is,  
A thing to reckon with; else long ago  
A white flash striking, or a draught too sweet,  
Had made swift room for some new sad-browed queen."

SLAVE

"Lady, I bring thee that will comfort thee.  
Like some poor way-worn beggar, hunger-faint,  
One lay without the gates; great Croesus passed

And bade us bring him in; I, watching him,  
 The while the others slept, (for many hours  
 Did pass in stupor ere he woke again)  
 Knew him for that young prince who in the train  
 Of lords from Ephesus, came hither once  
 And lingered many days; he knew me too,  
 As thy poor faithful slave, and taking this  
 He bade me bring it to the Queen, and say  
 That openly he dares not speak with her  
 Yet craves to kneel once more and kiss her feet."

*(He presents a jewel to the QUEEN; she takes it eagerly,  
 and examines it with evident joy.)*

QUEEN *(tenderly)*

"Ismenides! and hast thou risked thy death,  
 Lain sick beside the road, that thou to me  
 Might come thus empty, to be filled again?  
 Thou dearest beggar that e'er craved sweet alms."

*(to the slave)*

"Go, bring him here, for all are wrapped in sleep  
 And those great gods who sent him at this hour  
 Watch near us now to guide the hand of fate.  
 I will not fear; it is their hour, not mine."

*(The slave retires quickly to do her bidding, and the  
 QUEEN, unable to control her emotion, paces the  
 apartment with soft, rapid steps; showing by her  
 passionate gestures an overwhelming surprise and  
 joy. After a few moments she reseats herself, and  
 with a strong effort, assumes her usual majestic  
 demeanor. When ISMENIDES is admitted with great  
 caution by the slave (who then stands on guard  
 during the interview), the QUEEN receives him with  
 studied coldness, while he kneels at her feet, and  
 passionately kisses her hands.)*

ISMENIDES

"Lady, though many years have wearied me,  
 I count two visions as the whole of life;  
 One, when my eyes first raised themselves to thee  
 And fell in blindness, dazzled utterly.  
 Since then I walked in shadow; until now,  
 Oh, happiness! thy glory shines again,  
 And seeing it my very soul grows faint  
 With joy's sweet second coming, and the sight  
 Restored by her who left me in the dark."

QUEEN

"Alas, thou flatterer! I trust thee not."

ISMENIDES

"We trust not that we own, for presently  
 The flaws we make ourselves are all too plain."

QUEEN

"Indeed thou art not mine, for thou hast lain  
 In other bonds than these, at Ephesus."

ISMENIDES

"Ay, in the holding of Proserpine  
 Whose fruit is sweet unto love's loneliness."



QUEEN (*more softly*)

"Then Ione spoke soothly, thou wert ill."

ISMENIDES (*starting up*)

"'Tis true then, she is here, my Ione?"

QUEEN

"Why yes, she hath a princely lover here,  
And marches hence to-morrow in his train.  
A warlike maid, who loves not bowers like these."

ISMENIDES (*violently*)

"I will pursue them, and sore punish him  
Who hath defrauded me, and shamed her."

QUEEN (*scornfully*)

"Truly, thou'rt bold, to threaten Croesus so."

ISMENIDES (*turning pale*)

"The King? The King?"

QUEEN

"Ay, ay, the King! is it such news to thee  
That Croesus takes his pleasures royally?"

ISMENIDES (*grinding his teeth*)

"The gods send ruin on his impious head."

QUEEN (*whispering*)

"Ismenides, wilt thou be fate for him?  
I, too, am shamed, and Croesus' treachery  
Shall breed within the place he nourished it  
Till serpent-like it creeps to Persia's King.  
The gods have chosen thee, I think, for this."

ISMENIDES (*broodingly*)

"I am a free Ephesian, owing not  
Allegiance to this tyrant ravisher."

QUEEN

"Why truly, so thou art! and as for me  
Great Cyrus is my friend; then go to him  
And warn him quickly; take to him a scroll  
That I shall give thee; say I copied it  
Most secretly from Croesus' plan of war.  
'T will be enough, and we shall be avenged."

ISMENIDES (*eagerly*)

"I do but kiss thy hand, and then I'll go."

QUEEN (*changing her manner to one of great tenderness*)

"Nay, not so hurriedly; thou'rt travel sore  
And I am weary of my loneliness.  
Besides we must confer; these weighty deeds  
Whose infancy is brief, need time to grow  
Unto that stature which shall fright a king.  
To play at fate and fix her balances  
So Croesus shall go down, and Cyrus up,  
Takes wisdom wrought on courage cunningly  
As pearls are broidered on a warrior's shield."

ISMENIDES

"Then lady, keep my courage in thy hands  
And give it back when thou hast jeweled it;  
For by the gods! this is the Lotos-land  
And all my strength is swathed in golden dreams  
That are like cerements about my limbs."



I felt this numbness once when Hades loomed  
 Within the shadow that my body cast,  
 But now, in Paradise I fear it not  
 Because my soul is happy, seeing thee.  
 Yet when thou'rt ready lift the spell once more  
 And send me forth to serve thee valiantly."

QUEEN (*gayly*)

"I'll send thee; oh, I'll send thee; never fear!  
 For love is sweet, but so is vengeance too;  
 My hand upon thy brow shall soothe thy care  
 And lip on lip shall heal the longing pain  
 That I have known, and think that thou hast felt  
 A very little, though I trust thee not;  
 And when we have been happy for a day,  
 (A day we must postpone till Croesus goes)  
 Why then with ling'ring hands I'll push thee forth  
 And stiffen courage up with jealousy  
 Lest love should prove too dear and keep thee here.  
 But now thou art a beggar, sick and sore  
 And must lie sleeping till I send for thee;  
 Go—take him—Nilos; To thy watchful care  
 I give him; guard his life as mine."

(*She allows ISMENIDES to kiss her hand once more and then dismisses him hurriedly and silently. After the slave has led him away she stands in a listening attitude for awhile, and then passes into her sleeping chamber.*)

### ACT III.

(*In camp near Sardis—time afternoon. CROESUS' tent occupies the foreground and a little apart from it is pitched a gayly draped pavilion, at the entrance of which IONE is seated, playing on her lute. The curtains of the royal tent are closed, and two soldiers stand on guard, one of them a warrior of venerable appearance.*)

OLD WARRIOR

"'Twere well the gods destroyed me ere I came to this."

SECOND SOLDIER

"How now, my ancient one?"

OLD WARRIOR

"They slay the war-horse when his day is done;  
 I would that Croesus' sire had thus to me  
 Repaid a faithful servant's loyalty."

SECOND SOLDIER

"Hast scent of battle in thy nostrils then?"

OLD WARRIOR

"Rather the scent of shame for him I love;  
 How often when great Croesus was a child  
 I lifted him, wild clamoring, to my steed,  
 And bore him proudly on from rank to rank  
 That every soldier looking on his face  
 Might love the kingly babe and strike for him;  
 A nursling of the battlefield he grew  
 And waxed on warfare as if blood were milk."

SECOND SOLDIER

"And well he loves its flavor, even now."

OLD WARRIOR

"Ay, but still better when it floods the cheek  
Of the young maid who rests in yonder tent."

SECOND SOLDIER

"I blame him not; Ha, ha! if I were king!"

OLD WARRIOR (*muttering*)

"She is a false Ephesian; who can tell  
What treason may befall our arms from this."

SECOND SOLDIER

"Hush! hush! here comes the captain of the host."

*(An officer whose accoutrements and bearing proclaim his rank, approaches from the forest and the guards salute him.)*

OFFICER

"Old Theron, tell my master I would speak with him."

OLD WARRIOR

"My lord, he sleeps."

OFFICER

"'Tis well! I'm very glad of it.

Sleep is the ebbing of the day's rough stream  
That carries out our souls to soundless seas  
Whereon we drift to all that's sweet and strange  
Then turn and say 'Alas, we did but dream.'  
So let the King have sleep to solace him  
And dreams to give him respite from his grief."

*(He seats himself nearby, but at that moment the KING draws aside the curtains and appears at the door of the tent. The officer starts forward, and as CROESUS greets him kindly, kneels and kisses his hand with great reverence.)*

CROESUS

"Welcome, my Captain! I have looked for thee.  
But why this sad demeanor? 'tis not well  
To grieve too greatly over one defeat;  
I am a soldier, and I blame thee not."

CAPTAIN

"I dread thy anger, but still more thy grief  
My lord and King; for I have that to tell  
Will greatly anger and sore grieve thee too.  
This one mischance is nothing; but the cause  
The cruel treachery of one so dear——"

CROESUS (*angrily*)

"Treachery! and one so dear? thou ravest  
Or dost presume misfortune's heel to use  
And trample where allegiance yet is due."

CAPTAIN (*weeping*)

"Croesus, for many years my life has been  
A thing thou heldest lightly in thy hand  
And cast as freely 'gainst the enemy  
As thou would'st throw a spear or javelin;

And I have loved to be thus sternly thrown,  
 Glorving in thy power and majesty.  
 Thy wounds are mine, and who betrayest thee  
 Has set my heart a-bleeding unto death."

(CROESUS' face softens, and he lays his hand kindly on  
 the chief's shoulder.)

CROESUS

"I do believe it, and I love thee well;  
 Then tell thy tale, I'll listen patiently."

CAPTAIN

"My lord! my lord! I wish some other tongue  
 That found it not so bitter, brought it thee."

CROESUS

"Delay no more; thy words but torture thus."

CAPTAIN

"O King! our spies returned from Persia's camp  
 Have brought us word of one Ismenides  
 Who, left behind in Ephesus, was ill;  
 But at a word from Lady Ione——"

CROESUS (*fiercely*)

"Thou liest, dog!"

CAPTAIN (*sadly*)

"My lord, I am too bold; I'll leave thee then."

CROESUS

"Nay, nay! speak on; I'll hear this perfidy."

CAPTAIN

"A messenger from camp bore him a scroll  
 Which he, receiving, took to Cyrus straight."

CROESUS

"Avenging gods! what throat shall feel my spring?  
 The spy who foully made and fashioned this,  
 Or he who brings it with so false a face?  
 Listen, thou wretch! I spare thy crawling life  
 But as I spare a reptile in my road.  
 Knowing the hatred borne to Ephesus  
 By some among ye, I can wonder yet  
 That ye would dare to brave me, even now  
 When I am fallen, and my head is low."

(*The chief does not answer, but turns and would retire,  
 profound grief expressed in his face.*)

CROESUS

"Stay yet a moment! what contained this scroll?"

CAPTAIN

"My lord, thy line of march and plan of war."

CROESUS

"Ah, this is madness! did Ismenides  
 Read maps of war upon a sister's scroll  
 That held but loving words to comfort him?"

CAPTAIN (*humbly*)

"I know not, lord; but 'tis the jest in camp  
 Where Persia glories in our sore defeat,

That once again a woman has betrayed  
The hand that cherished her——”

CROESUS (*sternly*)

“Silence, thou slave! yet bring the spy to me.”

CAPTAIN

“I have him near at hand, I'll bring him in.”

(*He gives a signal at which the spy approaches, and the CAPTAIN retires leaving him with CROESUS, who orders the curtains of the tent to be drawn during the interview. In a few moments the spy reappears, looking pale and frightened, and makes his exit hurriedly. IONE, who has been sitting before her tent in the background, playing on her lute, now comes nearer the front of the stage, and placing herself on a bank under a large tree, at some distance away from the royal pavilion, she begins to sing.*)

#### SONG.

“The white rose of the King,” so Persia called her;  
She shrank, and whiter grew;  
Poor rose! the greatness of her love appalled her,  
Its short-lived joy she knew.

The King stooped down and said, “O rose! thy whiteness  
Hath been untined till now;  
Blush thou to red, sweet rose, and wreath with brightness  
Thy loving monarch's brow.”

Shivered the pale one then—“O King! adoring  
At thy dear feet I lie;  
But breathe not on me lest thy love's outpouring  
Shall mean thy rose must die.”

Too late! love's sunshine warms, uplifts, enthralls me;  
I climb unto thy breast;  
Blush at thy kiss, careless of what befalls me,  
And dying, die most blest.”

(CROESUS emerges from his tent, approaches unheard, and listens to the song, his face growing rigid. As she finishes he addresses her abruptly. IONE springs up gayly.)

IONE

“Welcome, my lord! but how you stole on me!”

CROESUS (*sternly*)

“Thy song displeases me. I like it not.”

IONE (*bewildered*)

“I thought myself alone, and knew not that  
It wearied thee. So then, I'll sing no more.”

CROESUS (*coldly*)

“I think thou'rt right, and thou shalt sing no more.”

IONE (*turning pale*)

“The Persians! have they come to slay us then?”

CROESUS

"Why no, not thee; for thou art Persia's friend."

IONE

"A cruel jest, my lord, and hath no point."

CROESUS

"Thou pointed it thyself a moment since.  
Heard I not, 'Persia's King—and love—and death?'  
Ay, thou shalt know all three and perfect it.  
'Twere pity that thy jest should fail in this."

IONE

"Thou art so strange; 'tis grief that maddens thee."

CROESUS

"Why yes, 'tis grief, and jesting such as thine.  
I ever loved true wit, but this is false."

IONE (*tenderly*)

"Beloved King, if I have erred in aught  
Or rasped where I would comfort, pardon me.  
I am the one sole maid 'mong armed men,  
While thou art plunged in care and do forget  
The little comrade who left all for thee.  
I did but sing for pastime here alone."

CROESUS (*holding out his arms*)

"Come here then; sing once more! I like the words.  
They were of love, and death, and perfidy."

IONE (*sadly, but running to him*)

"Of love, and death, but not of perfidy.  
Oh, thou art very strange!"

CROESUS

"The last words were the sweetest; sing, I say!"

IONE (*bravely*)

"Thou holdest me too closely, yet I'll sing."

(*Sings*)

"Too late! love's sunshine warms, uplifts, enthralls me,  
I climb unto thy breast;  
Blush at thy kiss, careless of what befalls me,  
And dying, die most blest.—Ah, ah!"

CROESUS (*pressing her against his mailed bosom*)

"Then die! and think thou'rt happy in thy death."

IONE (*terrified*)

"My lord, I fear! I fear! and thou dost hurt me."

CROESUS

"These arms that hold thee are not Persia's, yet  
They can make very close a last embrace."

IONE (*struggling to free herself*)

"Croesus, if thou dost love me, loose thine hold!"

CROESUS

"Come nearer; I would have thee on the heart  
That thou betrayest to captivity."

IONE

"Thou ravest! Ione was never false,  
Nor Croesus cruel. Ah, thy breast is hard!"  
(*She gasps, and her face grows rigid with pain.*)



CROESUS

"An iron heart, that thou did'st heat and heat  
And give to Persia's flail when it was red.  
'Tis very hard? why yes, 'tis beaten so."

*(He exerts great strength, and crushes her in his tightened arms. She raises her eyes in one last anguished look, and then her head falls back.)*

CROESUS

"A crystal goblet broken at a touch  
Were not more frail than she."

*(He gazes upon her unmoved for a moment, and then his calm breaks and he weeps convulsively, and rains kisses on the dead face.)*

## ACT IV

*(A public square in Sardis. A pyre stands ready to be lighted; on it are stacked the arms of the defeated Lydians. A detachment of Persian troops surround the square. Near the pyre stands KING CYRUS with his chief officers. Before him is CROESUS, bound as if for sacrifice.)*

CYRUS

"Unbind him! Chains are not for such as he.  
Most noble Croesus, knowing not thy worth  
I had condemned thee on this pyre to die;  
But thou art wisdom's self; no words like these  
That thou hast spoken ere were heard by me.  
I'll keep thee near me as an honored friend  
Who counsels in each sore emergency."

CROESUS

"Great Cyrus! since my consciousness awoke  
And put the question, 'whence came I to this?'  
I have not said to any 'tis thy will!  
Yet had I drawn from lower sources life  
Which could flow tributary to the stream  
That from Olympus started thy great course,  
It would be gladness in that shining flood  
To merge my turbid being—seeing thee  
Most near akin in god-like majesty.  
But such conjunction now, would devastate;  
I still have power, and it would surge and beat  
And rise in tidal ruin to us both.  
Two things in all my life have gladdened me;  
One, the mad joy of war; the trumpet blast—  
The hot and panting breath that bursts the heart.  
The other—ah! and here is bitter woe!  
I played with love for years; I was the King,  
Who thought that flowers were meant for handling  
And then to throw aside and care no more.  
But one came—one—Ah! Ah! it is too much;  
I cannot word it. In my age she came  
And was as if the gods had gathered up

All sweetnesses of earth to pleasure me;  
 In one last cup to crown and curse the feast.  
 She loved me when I stole her from the Greeks  
 And would have followed me to Hades then,  
 But in her blood a strange rebellious strain  
 Fought ever for that freedom held so long  
 By the Ephesians till my hand o'ercame  
 And harnessed them unwilling to my state.  
 I, in my doting, thought to please her, when  
 I conned my maps of war; and let her look  
 Upon the scroll, and mocking, counsel me.  
 Ah, fool! and yet my heart is like to burst  
 To think I killed her for her treachery.  
 She was a sister to Ismenides.  
 Who brought thee tidings——"

(ISMENIDES, *who is in attendance on CYRUS, rushes forward.*)

ISMENIDES

"O King! what hast thou done to Ione?  
 She is most innocent of wrong to thee,  
 Though falsder than a slave to Ephesus.  
 What hast thou done? tell me, thou torturer!"

CYRUS

"Peace, Captain! Peace! thou speakest to a king,  
 Who fallen, yet has homage as his due."

ISMENIDES

"I was born free in Ephesus, my lord;  
 And here a tyrant meets his punishment."

CYRUS

"Peace then! I do command thee as thy chief."

ISMENIDES (*wildly*)

"But Ione! my little Ione!  
 My little sister lost and shamed by him!  
 Must I be silent to her murderer?"

CYRUS

"Croesus, I beg thee of thy courtesy  
 To calm this one who would inquire of thee."

CROESUS (*half dazed, and moving near the pyre*)

"Yes, yes! I'll calm him; he'll be calmer soon."

ISMENIDES

"Oh, tell me! is she dead?"

CROESUS (*slowly*)

"Why yes; I killed her for her treachery."

ISMENIDES

"Tyrant! She was most faithful unto thee  
 And only false unto her state and kin."

CROESUS (*sternly*)

"She was not false? who on my very breast  
 By subtle sympathy and wise, sweet ways  
 Beguiled my wisdom from me; called herself  
 My little counsellor, and urged me to the war.  
 Then while my love-besotted brain still slept

Sent messengers to thee with maps and charts  
 That thou as an Ephesian, loving not  
 The hand that bound thee in a golden chain,  
 Wert very swift to bring to Cyrus here;  
 And he, good soldier, did as all must do,  
 Taking from foulest hands the gift of fate."

CYRUS

"Croesus, thou art unjust, to this one here,  
 And to the little maid he asks of thee."

CROESUS

"Unjust! he brought you not a scroll?"

CYRUS

"He brought a scroll, indeed. 'Twas from your Queen  
 Copied in Sardis ere you marched from thence."

CROESUS (*staggering*)

"The Queen? Ah—so—it was the Queen! she said  
 She would have vengeance on us; 'twas the Queen!"

(*He snatches a lighted torch from an attendant, and  
 springs toward the pyre. CYRUS rushes forward  
 to stop him.*)

CROESUS (*struggling*)

"I need the fire to cleanse me; let me go!  
 Death's in my arms; she lies upon my breast  
 And clasps me coldly—not like Ione.  
 I'm sick with horror of her noisome breath  
 Her purple, swollen lips, and starting eyes.  
 We'll burn then, since she will not loose her hold."

CYRUS (*overborne by CROESUS' mad strength*)

"Come bind him, guards! mad lions must be chained."

(*The guards obey, but before they can reach him CROESUS  
 has mounted the pyre and flung his torch upon the  
 inflammable material. The flames rise about him  
 instantly. CYRUS stands and gazes as if petrified.  
 The soldiers press about the pyre with wild cries.*)

CURTAIN.



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